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PROBABLE SOVIET REACTIONS TO A REMILITARIZATION OF WESTERN GERMANY

1. The Soviet leaders must be convinced that if Western Germany should be fully rearmed, given equal status with the NATO powers, and closely associated with them in the alliance, the situation would in all probability present an obvious and grave threat to Soviet security. They probably estimate that a revived and rearmed Western Germany would sooner or later draw its allies into a campaign for German reunification and for the recovery of lost German territories now in the Soviet sphere. They doubtless also believe that a German army would represent an ideal tool for an attack by capitalist countries on the Socialist citadel. The threat of Germany to Russia is of long standing, and has frequently called for extreme counteracting measures.

2. Moreover, it is highly unlikely that the Soviets will consider that a program of German rearmament, once well under way, will stop short of complete remilitarization. They will have faith neither in the will nor in the ability of the western powers to limit Germany to purely defensive military forces. It is therefore to be expected that the rulers of the USSR will contemplate war whenever they become convinced that the state of German rearmament, plus the political relations between Western Germany and the western powers, have developed nearly to a point of immediate threat and can be dealt with by no other means.

3. The creation of an effective German defensive force cannot be accomplished in less than two or three years, however; to build a strong of-

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~~SECRET~~


- 2 -

defensive military establishment would take longer. During this time many factors may be brought to bear by the Soviets to change the direction in which the German people and government are moving, to dissolve their connections with the western powers, and to weaken the cohesion and prevent the strengthening of the NATO itself. Unless the USSR desires war for other reasons, therefore, it will not be likely to precipitate it in reaction to the early stages of West German rearmament.

4. To hinder and delay the progress of German rearmament will nevertheless become probably the principal immediate objective of Soviet policy. The most important element in the Soviet program, on which indeed its general success will hinge, will be the inculcation throughout Europe and the western world of a conviction that German rearmament will inevitably lead to war.

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 Suiting their words to their

audience, the Communists will suggest that German rearmament will produce German aggression, or that it will become an instrument of US aggression, or that it will so gravely threaten the USSR and its allies as to call for the initiation of defensive war.

5. Unmistakeable announcements of the seriousness with which the Soviets view German rearmament have already been made in the Prague Declaration and in Soviet notes to the western powers asking for a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers. Meanwhile, the Communists have intensified their efforts, especially in Western Germany, to increase the fear of war and to point out that Germany will inevitably become a battleground in such a con-

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- 3 -

flict. Propaganda efforts along these lines will doubtless be redoubled. In the state of general alarm and despondency which the Communists will thereby try to produce, further and more positive courses of Soviet action will have their best chances of success.

6. By proposing a peaceful re-establishment of German unity through the summoning of an all-German constituent council and the formulation of a constitution, the Soviets have sought to provide an attractive alternative to the war and destruction which they predict if German rearmament goes forward. On the one hand, they have encouraged the Germans to submit a common German proposal for unity to the consideration of the four occupation powers; on the other, they have requested that the same general plan be discussed at a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers. It is probable that the principal efforts of the Soviets, diplomatically and in propaganda, will be directed during the next months to urging upon the world the reasonableness of their proposals for German unity, and to emphasizing by contrast and with thinly veiled threats the inevitable consequences which will arise from a failure to settle the German problem "peacefully".

7. The chief impact of this Soviet procedure will at first be felt by the Germans themselves. Not only have the Soviets appealed to the German desire for a unified state; they have already, by means of the Grotewohl letter, suggested their willingness to give German initiative towards unification considerable scope for activity. They can, of course, reinforce these moves by appealing to various Western German irritations with the western occupying powers, and to the desire of West German businessmen for

CONFIDENTIAL

SECRET

-- 4 --

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increased trade with the East.

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But the most powerful weapon of the Soviets against the Germans will be the threat of war.

8. A major and increasing effort will doubtless be made by the Soviets to hinder German rearmament by dividing and frustrating the powers of the western alliance. If a Council of Foreign Ministers is held, it will be used by the Soviets to delay western action by fruitless argument. To the French the Soviets will play not only upon the fear of general war but upon the fear of German rearmament. They may make a more or less definite proposition to establish a disarmed and "neutralized" Germany, and perhaps also to guarantee French frontiers. They may remind the French of the traditions of Franco-Russian alliances for protection against Germany. Especially in view of the adverse effects which the Korean situation has had upon French confidence, it may well be that such an offer would be hard for the French to resist. Even the British, who are by no means unanimously reconciled to the prospects of German rearmament, might also find it difficult to remain impervious to suggestions for a "peaceful" settlement. Although the British would doubtless face the prospect of atomic bombing of London with fortitude if their national existence were at stake, it is not certain that they would care to do so over what could be represented as the mere question of German rearmament.

CONFIDENTIAL

SECRET

- 5 -

9. Since it is estimated that the Soviets will not wish to precipitate general war at an early date solely in order to prevent German rearmament, it follows that they cannot use overt military action against Western Germany or Berlin either by their own troops or by those of the satellites, including East Germany. Any such action would almost certainly lead to war. Provocative military and para-military demonstrations will probably be employed, primarily for the purpose of advertising the seriousness with which the USSR views the problem, and thereby of further frightening the Germans and the western powers. Such displays may take the form of ostentatious exhibitions of the military strength of Soviet and Bereitschaften forces, mass demonstrations of Communist youth and labor groups, etc. Outbreaks of violence in West Berlin and Western Germany may also be staged.

10. A renewal of the Berlin blockade must be considered a distinct possibility. Such a renewal would probably be preceded by harassing tactics designed to make the allied position in Berlin difficult or untenable; these could be represented as actions of the German Democratic Republic, and would therefore carry less risk of provoking local armed collisions which might lead to war.

11. In summary, it is estimated that although the Soviets will eventually be willing to run the gravest risks of general war in order to prevent the rearmament of Germany and its consolidation into the western bloc, they will refrain from accepting such risks until the possibilities of four-power agree-

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SECRET

- 6 -

ment have been exhausted. Since any settlement of the German problem satisfactory to the USSR would presumably be unsatisfactory to the US, the Soviets will base their campaign for such a settlement on the most strenuous efforts to break the will of the western European powers to resist, to weaken the NATO, and to intimidate the West Germans. If these efforts fail, they will turn to more drastic measures.

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